

DECEMBER 7, 1976

NATO MEETINGS UNDERWAY

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN DISCUSSES THE CURRENT ANNUAL MEETINGS OF NATO (NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION) DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS.

VOICE: THE MEETINGS FOLLOW AN ESTABLISHED PATTERN. FIRST THERE WAS THE JUST-CONCLUDED MEETING OF THE NATO EURO GROUP. AS ITS NAME IMPLIES THE GROUP INCLUDES WEST EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION-- WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FRANCE. TODAY AND TOMORROW (TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY) THE FIFTEEN NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS MEET TO EXAMINE THE LEVELS OF ARMED FORCES CONTEMPLATED FOR THE NEXT YEAR AND MESH EACH MEMBER'S FORCE LEVELS INTO THOSE OVERALL PLANS. AND THURSDAY AND FRIDAY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF NATO CONSULT ON THE POLITICAL - MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE.

AS A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE EURO GROUP SUGGESTS, ALL THESE DELIBERATIONS WILL SHARE A COMMON THREAD. IT IS THE ALLIANCE'S CONCERN WITH THE VARSAW PACT'S CONTINUED MILITARY BUILD-UP IN MILITARY STRENGTH IN EUROPE, AND EQUAL CONCERN OVER A SIMILAR INCREASE IN SOVIET STRENGTH IN AREAS OUTSIDE EUROPE.

THE SOVIET BUILDUPS ARE SEEN BY MANY OBSERVERS IN AND OUTSIDE OF NATO AS EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES ARE SEEKING NOT MILITARY EQUALITY WITH THE NON-COMMUNIST WORLD BUT ACTUALLY MILITARY SUPERIORITY OVER IT. RECENT STUDIES BY THE WIDELY- RESPECTED LONDON- BASED INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES EMPHASIZE THIS POINT-- AS HAVE SEVERAL EUROPEAN LEADERS IN RECENT MONTHS.

NATO'S COMMANDER IN CHIEF, GENERAL (ALEXANDER) HAIG JUST THIS WEEK UNDERLINED THIS ASPECT IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH

TWO AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS. AT THE SAME TIME GENERAL HAIG NOTED THAT WHILE CONCERN OVER THE SOVIET AND WARSAW PACT BUILDUP IS JUSTIFIED, NATO AT PRESENT IS FULLY CAPABLE OF MEETING ANY CHALLENGE POSED BY IT. BUT HE, LIKE THE EURO GROUP'S COMMUNIQUE, EMPHASIZED THAT IF THAT CAPABILITY IS TO BE MAINTAINED, NATO'S MEMBERS MUST INTENSIFY THEIR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATION'S STRONG COLLECTIVE DEFENSES.

ONE SUCH IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTED BY THE UNITED STATES IS THE ADOPTION OF A NEW EARLY WARNING AIRBORNE RADAR SYSTEM. ITS AIM IS TO BUY ADDITIONAL TIME FOR NATO FORCES TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO ANY ATTACK BY A POTENTIAL ENEMY. THE SYSTEM, CALLED AWAC, IS DESIGNED TO DETECT LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT, THUS CLOSING A GAP IN NATO AIR DEFENSES. OTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN NATO DEFENSES WHICH WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE DEFENSE MINISTERS INCLUDE GREATER STANDARDIZATION OF THE ALLIANCE'S CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS.

UNDERLYING THESE TECHNICAL DETAILS, OF COURSE, IS THE GENERAL REALIZATION BY THE NATO DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS THAT IMPROVEMENT OF NATO DEFENSES WILL REQUIRE MONEY. THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY RECOGNIZED THIS AS REFLECTED IN ITS INCREASED DEFENSE BUDGETS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. FRANCE HAS PROPOSED A SIMILAR BUDGET INCREASE FOR THIS YEAR.

THE MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS THIS WEEK PROVIDE UNDENIABLE PROOF THAT THE COMMITMENT OF NATO MEMBERS TODAY IS JUST AS VALID AS IT WAS WHEN THE ORGANIZATION CAME INTO BEING ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AGO.